

## Russians Link Sinking of Kursk to Strategic Crisis

by Jonathan Tennenbaum

Extraordinary statements by Russian President Vladimir Putin and leading representatives of the Russia Armed Forces in recent days, confirm what Lyndon LaRouche and this publication have insisted from the beginning: The Aug. 12 sinking of the Russian atomic submarine *Kursk* occurred in the context of an ongoing, global strategic crisis—a crisis whose reality continues to be hysterically denied by practically the entire Western press and leading institutions.

“A condition like the sinking of the *Kursk*, is not an isolated event,” LaRouche emphasized in his Sept. 1 keynote to the international conference of the Schiller Institute (full text in last week’s *EIR*). “This was not an *incident*. There was not a ‘*Kursk* incident,’ that provoked a crisis. *There was a crisis in which the sinking of the Kursk occurred. A strategic crisis.*”

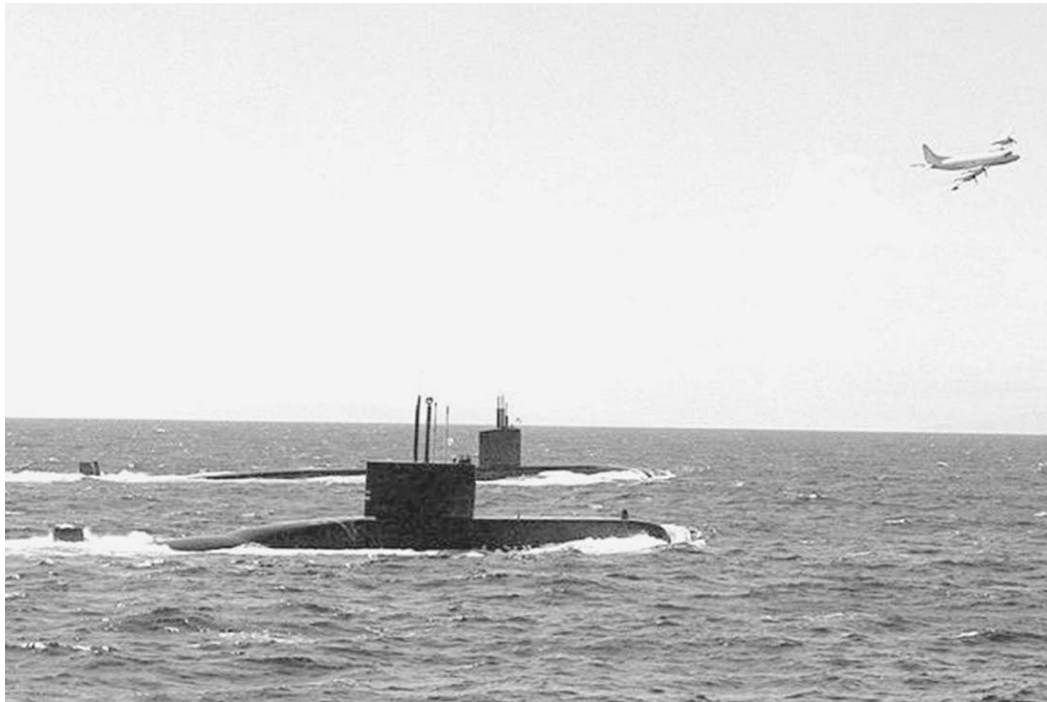
Now, a high-ranking Russian Navy officer has made exactly this point. In the daily *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* of Sept. 12 and 13, Rear Adm. Valeri Aleksin (ret.), recently retired as chief navigation officer of the Russian Navy, authored a lengthy review of nuclear submarine collisions during the past three decades, presenting details never before officially discussed from the Russian side. Each of the collisions, he emphasized, may be associated with “years of aggravated international tension: 1968-1970, 1979-1981, 1983, 1986.”

President Putin himself addressed the matter in only slightly less explicit terms, during his interview with Larry King of CNN on Sept. 8, a substantial part of which was devoted to the *Kursk* affair. Although his remarks were couched in diplomatic language—hardly surprising, given the existence of confidential agreements between the Russian

and U.S. governments, to contain the explosive implications of the affair—Putin used some unusual formulations, whose implications are unmistakable to any well-informed person.

Thus, when first asked by King about the *Kursk* sinking, Putin responded: “Unfortunately, today we cannot tell you much about the causes of this tragedy.” But, later in the interview, Putin suddenly added: “This was not the first such incident. . . . I can say that we know of 19 cases since 1967, when our submarines collided with underwater objects. . . . Therefore, nothing extraordinary happened in that regard.” Putin did not spell out the nature of the “other underwater objects,” but the reference was unambiguous to anyone familiar with the latest material released by Admiral Aleksin on the history of approximately 20 collisions between Russian and U.S. nuclear submarines in the period referred to by Putin, and with Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev’s repeated identification of the “collision version” as most plausible in the sinking of the *Kursk*. Putin’s words also echoed those of Russian Deputy Chief of Staff, Gen. Col. Valeri Manilov, who on Sept. 5 referred to “hard evidence” of a collision as the cause of the *Kursk* disaster, including discovery of debris of a foreign submarine on the ocean floor.

Furthermore, in his CNN interview Putin referred to his direct consultations with U.S. President Clinton in the period immediately following the incident, stating (once more in well-chosen diplomatic language): “As a rule, President Clinton and I discuss a broad range of issues, and I am very grateful to him, for his quick response to our tragedy, how he expressed condolences, and offered assistance in our first telephone conversation, which confirms that this question



*Surveillance of naval maneuvers by U.S. and South Korean submarines.*

will permanently be on our agenda at our future meetings.” He added: “A thorough analysis of what happened is mandatory. And perhaps, together with our partners, we should develop more effective rules of conduct on the high seas.”

### **The Chief Navigator’s Article**

A new light was thrown on these remarks and the entire *Kursk* incident, by Admiral Aleksin’s extraordinary two-part article, offering the 30-year history of collisions, as well as “new information [which] has come to light concerning the situation in the ocean, where the tactical exercises of the Northern Fleet were being held, about the condition of the *Kursk* itself, and about *the reaction of certain foreign officials and official institutions.*”

Admiral Aleksin dropped a bombshell, claiming that *Putin first learned of the sinking of the Kursk in a telephone conversation with U.S. President Clinton, even before the Russian naval command knew about it!* Thereby, Aleksin draws a close parallel between the circumstances of the *Kursk* sinking and the crises which occurred in Fall 1986, at a moment when Lyndon LaRouche was at the center of the strategic conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union over the Strategic Defense Initiative.

On Oct. 3, 1986 a fire broke out on board the Soviet strategic ballistic missile-carrying nuclear submarine K-219 in the Atlantic. The fire, Aleksin says, was caused by an underwater collision with a U.S. nuclear submarine of the Los Angeles class, which ripped open the hatch of a missile tube on the K-219, causing the missile inside to implode and catch fire. He then writes:

“The Soviet leader at that time, Mikhail Gorbachov, first learned of this accident from a telephone conversation with U.S. President Ronald Reagan, even before the Soviet Defense Minister and the Supreme Commander of the Soviet Navy reported it to him, and even before the reception of the report from the commander of the K-219 to shore, concerning the accident on board the atomic sub. We ask readers to pay attention to this fact, since it will be repeated again in August 2000.”

Coming back to this point after presenting a detailed technical account, including a diagram, of the alleged collision of the *Kursk* with a U.S. or British submarine during the maneuvers of Aug. 12, 2000, leading to an explosion of a torpedo on board the *Kursk* and the crashing of the submarine onto the sea bottom, Aleksin writes:

“Now, it is time to recall Ronald Reagan’s telephone call to Mikhail Gorbachov on Oct. 3, 1986. Likewise, Bill Clinton now phoned Vladimir Putin on Aug. 13, 2000. The content of their conversation is unknown, but two days later, the Director of the CIA visited Moscow incognito. As one popular newspaper wrote, a high-ranking Foreign Intelligence Service officer paid with his job, for the fact that this visit became public. Almost immediately after that conversation and visit, Bill Clinton announced that he would not sign the bill to launch NMD, which Russia had opposed so strenuously this year. Isn’t that strange?”

The implication, of course, is that Clinton knew of the *Kursk* sinking because of the involvement of a U.S. (or British) submarine, urgently conferring with Putin in order to prevent an escalation of the incident, and that an agreement

was reached under which the United States offered concessions and compensation. (Remarks to the same effect have appeared in several Russian press commentaries in recent days.)

One should also recall, that the *Kursk* incident occurred on the eve of the Democratic Party National Convention, and could have had a dramatic political impact, had the full circumstances of the incident become publicly known. Without being personally present at that Congress, Lyndon LaRouche was implicitly the hottest issue there, because LaRouche was the focus of the opposition to Al Gore inside the Democratic Party. Interestingly, the same LaRouche, as the intellectual author of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) adopted by Reagan, was at the center of the overall strategic conflicts which took place during Fall 1986. Previously the Soviet leadership had openly demanded, in the pages of *Izvestia* and *Pravda*, that the Reagan Administration “do something about LaRouche”—a demand pushed at the same time by LaRouche’s enemies inside the Anglo-American Establishment. Just *three days* after the Oct. 3 submarine collision and Reagan’s alleged urgent call to Gorbachov, an army of more than 300 FBI agents and other Federal, state, and local authorities raided the Leesburg, Virginia headquarters of several organizations connected with LaRouche, in an attempt to crush LaRouche’s political movement. This was the beginning of a process leading to the jailing of LaRouche and several associates. As the “Get LaRouche” task force made final preparations for that raid, Reagan was on his way to a summit meeting with Gorbachov at Reykjavik, Iceland.

### **Putin Under Attack**

As is often the training of professionals such as Putin, the almost exaggerated coolness with which he spoke of the affair—witness his ironical formulation, “nothing extraordinary happened”—in fact reflects the opposite: The situation on Aug. 12-13 and the following days was very hot and very dangerous.

One should bear in mind, that 1) the whole affair occurred on the eve of the U.S. Democratic National Convention, a branching point for the world situation; 2) the *Kursk* sinking interrupted plans for a top-level summit of leaders of the Community of Independent States (CIS) in Yalta on Aug. 18-19, at which issues of vital strategic military importance were to be discussed; 3) as has now been revealed by Ukrainian officials, Putin himself was the target of an assassination plot, planned to occur in Yalta on Aug. 18; 4) according to Russian press sources, a “live” assassination attempt did occur on Aug. 31; 5) on the night of Sept. 11, almost exactly a month after the *Kursk* disaster, Putin was targeted by still another, very serious assassination attempt, as a speeding automobile attempted to ram into the Presidential convoy on a Moscow boulevard. Reportedly, the auto was fired upon by Putin’s security detail, before it collided with, and overturned a limousine carrying bodyguards of the President.

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## Documentation

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### **Most Probably, a Foreign Submarine Rammed the Kursk**

*The following are excerpts from an article in Nezavisimaya Gazeta on Sept. 12 and 13, by Rear Admiral Valeri Ivanovich Aleksin. The author is a professor at the Academy of Military Sciences, and former chief navigational officer of the Soviet and Russian Navy. These excerpts were translated by EIR.*

A month has passed since the terrible day of August 12, 2000, when the *Kursk*, the most modern nuclear submarine cruiser of the Northern Fleet, armed with 24 supersonic “Granit” anti-ship cruise missiles and the same number of modern torpedoes, and commanded by one of the best submarine commanders, Captain First Rank Gennadi Lyachin, was lost during tactical fleet exercises, at a depth of 108 meters on the floor of the Barents Sea. The 118 members of the crew perished. . . .

The crew had no time. Just as there was no time for the 98 crew members of the Pacific Fleet submarine K-129, when, on the night of March 7 to March 8, 1968, on duty in the northern sector of the Pacific Ocean, it received a terrible blow from the sail of the U.S. submarine “Swordfish,” in the area of the bulkhead between the second and third compartments (the central post and main command point are located in the third compartment, where the command functions of the submarine are concentrated and where all the command personnel were located). The blow cut our submarine nearly in half. All the members of the submarine crew, who were located in the second and third compartments, were killed in the first 5-10 seconds. The rest were crushed by the pressure in the compartments in the course of 1-1.5 minutes, when the submarine sank to five kilometers depth in the ocean

In April 1970, the Northern Fleet’s nuclear submarine K-8 sank after a fire, while returning from combat duty, with the loss of its 52 crew members.

But, on orders from the top leadership of the country, nothing was said about these catastrophes, which were tragedies on a national scale, nor was the public informed about the heroism of the dead sailors, nor were their relatives told the true causes of their death.

The tragic situation of the *Kursk* was amplified by the unprecedented openness, with which domestic and foreign media reported on literally every minute of the unfolding disaster, the actions and statements of all Russian and foreign officials, as well as of other individuals, colleagues, relatives of the dead submariners, and ordinary citizens of Russia and the entire world. There had never been anything like it. True, both in the statements from officials, and in those of numerous